

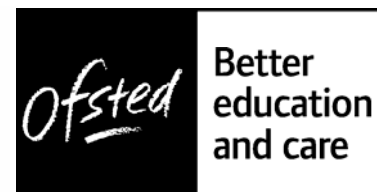
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Making Social Care
Better for People



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1 December 2005

Dear Mrs Fitt

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE CITY COUNCIL'S EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SERVICES 2005

This letter summarises the findings of the meeting held on 20 July 2005 to assess the performance of the education and social care services within your council. We are grateful for the information which you provided to support this process and for the time made available by yourself and your colleagues to discuss relevant issues.

Being healthy

The outcomes in this area are good. There is good promotion of healthy lifestyles through schools working to accreditation against standards, through multi-agency targeted projects and through grants to the voluntary sector. Teenage pregnancy targets are not being met in Newcastle and figures are above regional and national averages. A recently established Partnership Board leads action planning on this issue and there are plans to target resources on identified 'hot spots'.

There is an established support system to provide advice support and resources for schools who have asylum seeking children. There is a high level of support from the council to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and this has recently been enhanced by an additional nurse for services to asylum seekers. The Youth Offending Team (YOT) meets targets for referral to CAMHS with a 100% performance. Young people are actively involved in the improvement/development programme for CAMHS.

The level of health assessments for looked after children has reduced this year, and this has been attributed to difficulties within systems, but performance is still relatively high. There are specific signposted services for vulnerable groups within Newcastle including looked after children and those working with the YOT. A multi-agency looked after partnership supports service improvements for looked after children.

Staying safe

Outcomes in this area are good. The council has a high number of referrals, significantly above its comparator group, and should explore the implications of this with partner agencies for thresholds, individual agency responsibilities and social service workloads. Performance in meeting timescales for initial assessments has incrementally reduced but reflects national performance. There is a good response from schools to their child protection responsibilities. The relatively high numbers of asylum seekers/refugees in the city are supported by a multi-agency team and the council has positively responded to the individual needs of unaccompanied asylum seekers. Building on previous work the council is proactively responding to their new responsibilities within private fostering, investing resources and seeking to raise levels of awareness amongst front line staff and within the community.

The council has high and increasing numbers of children on the child protection register (per 10,000 population under 18: 2003/04, 39.8; 2004/05, 44) and supports this with a strong focus on child protection services. There is a good performance on performance indicators (reviews and de-registration). The impact of child protection as a high volume, high cost service has implications for the council's ability to respond to children in need and prevent drift to an increased level of harm/risk. There is a challenging agenda for the council and partner agencies to develop responsive family support services whilst maintaining the current level of child protection services. This has previously been identified as an issue for the council in CSCI performance reports and is confirmed by a research report commissioned by the council. Newcastle agencies have highlighted risk areas (substance misuse and domestic violence) on which they are targeting services and resources. Monitoring and evaluation of that work should inform future service planning.

Universal systems in health initially track all children, and education has a good protocol and systems for tracking and information exchange, supported by child protection procedures where relevant. However, the council needs to be confident that there are appropriate links between the two systems. The city's child index, shortly to be operational, will be populated with information from health and education and will be a valuable information source.

The council has high numbers of looked after children, presenting challenges in placement and placement choice. There has been a reduction in the long-term stability of children and the council should ensure that they have an effective strategy to support carers and children in placements. The council's multi-agency looked after partnership offers a forum for service review and development. A high percentage of looked after children are in family placements and the council has a strong track record in adoption but needs to ensure that they meet national targets for timescales for arriving at best interest decisions for children. The safety of children is being promoted through a current review of all CRB checks to ensure compliance with legal

requirements. Pressure on placements has resulted in a relatively high number of children being placed out of area and there are risk assessment/monitoring and support systems in place.

A coordinator post is taking forward plans for a Newcastle Local Children Safeguarding Board building on a history of inter-agency working in child protection. The well-being and intervention responsibilities of that board will present a challenging agenda for all children and family agencies in Newcastle.

The Children's Trust (Health, Social Services and Education) has provided a specialist multi-agency service for children with disabilities and has actively worked with carers in developing a more responsive flexible service.

Enjoying and achieving

Outcomes in this area are satisfactory. The council recognises the need to raise standards and has established an Education Commission which reports in autumn 2005. It has targeted resources and worked with partners to secure improvements in some key indicators. However, there is no continuous or sustained trend of improvement over recent years in Newcastle schools and analysis of attainment at all key stages indicates performance below the national average, and, in several cases, below that of statistical neighbours.

There are significant numbers of good early years providers, indicating that sound progress towards learning goals is being met in these settings. However, the quality of school and crèche day care is below the national average. Standards achieved by pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 are below the national average in reading, writing and mathematics, and significantly below statistical neighbours in mathematics in 2004.

Results at Key Stage 2 improved significantly in 2004, although (as yet unvalidated) data suggests that this trend has not been sustained in 2005. The rate of improvement in English and mathematics to 2004 was at a faster rate than nationally, but nonetheless, results at Key Stage 2 in English, mathematics and science all remain below the national average. Performance in writing at Key Stage 1 and 2 is a priority for the council. There was a dip in performance at Key Stage 3 in 2004, which led to more focused intervention and support. Attainment improved in 2005, by two percentage points in mathematics and four percentage points in science, according to (as yet unvalidated) evidence provided by the council. Outcomes at Key Stage 3 remain below national average figures.

There were significant improvements at Key Stage 4 in 2004, following work by schools and colleges in better matching the curriculum to the needs and interests of 14 to 16 year old pupils and developing vocational subjects. The proportion of pupils who achieved five or more GCSE A* to C grades or equivalent increased by 5.6 percentage

points in 2004, which was twice the national average rate of improvement. In large part, this was due to an improvement in boys' achievements. In addition, the proportion of pupils gaining one or more GCSEs at A* to G has improved and fewer gained no GCSEs or equivalent in 2004. However, the council performs below the national average on all these measures. Pupils' progress between Key Stages 2 to 3, 3 to 4, and 2 to 4 was below that expected, in comparison with both national and statistical neighbour values.

The council has improved the outcomes for children who are looked after, albeit from a low baseline, particularly at Key Stages 2 and 4. Although absence of this group is relatively high, it is improving. Children and young people from most minority ethnic groups perform at or above the city average. Pupils of Chinese and Indian heritage achieve well and achievement of Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils has improved and is at the city average in 2004 at GCSE. Overall, children with special educational needs achieve well and many make good progress. Pupils in special schools gain external accreditation which enables them to progress.

The council is addressing the high rate of permanent exclusions in the secondary phase, and figures over recent years show a steady decline. Schools are encouraged to avoid permanently excluding pupils by referring them to the multi-agency Placement Review Group which seeks alternative solutions, including referral to the PRU or placement on an alternative education programme. The rate of permanent exclusions from special schools and for statemented pupils is below average. Although it remains slightly below the national average, attendance, including for children who are looked after, is improving.

The quality of education is generally satisfactory or better. It is better in primary schools where it is often good, but there are weaknesses in teaching and learning in secondary schools. The council has a below average proportion of its schools in categories of concern as judged by school inspections. Currently there is one school in special measures and one which is underachieving. School improvement activity has not yet demonstrated the ability to drive up standards of attainment consistently across all key stages.

Making a positive contribution

Outcomes in this area are good overall. The council has a strong focus on partnership working and on the engagement of children, young people and their parents in order to improve services. However, there is a need for greater coordination of participation activities, to develop better sharing and use of information and improve feedback to young people. There has been some very good progress in the involvement of young people in decision-making. This includes: the development of a participation strategy; the appointment of a participation coordinator; the use of Viewpoint software to engage young people in a wide range of participation activities; the establishment of a

participation post for the Children's Trust; participation training for staff and encouragement to seek membership of the Investing in Children programme. There is a whole myriad of opportunities available for young people to participate in decisions about services in the local area. Newcastle gained an award for its Children's Fund Voices Project from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) and is currently involving young people in a major piece of work on the Every Child Matters outcomes framework for the city. The voice of young people with special educational needs and from minority ethnic groups is actively sought. High numbers of children who are looked after contribute to their reviews. A strategy for young carers is being developed and there is agreed funding for a post to be based at the Carer's Centre.

Recent inspections of nursery education have shown that the development of children's personal, social and emotional development is at least good, and often very good. School inspection reports show a similar picture: spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are at least satisfactory, and mostly good or very good. There are effective procedures for monitoring and reducing bullying, racism and other forms of harassment. For some time, the YOT has been under-resourced. The council has commissioned a full review and has already taken action to increase the early intervention team in order to reduce the numbers of first time offenders, and re-offending levels are within national targets.

Achieving economic well-being

Outcomes in this area are good overall. The strategies for 14 to 19 education and training are good, and the council has worked closely with the local Learning and Skills Council and Connexions to develop a clear and comprehensive strategy set out in 'Every Learner Counts'. There has been good progress on improving opportunities and increasing participation in education and training for young people aged 14 to 19. At Key Stage 4, young people have a good choice of vocational options and access to a wider work-related curriculum. All Key stage 4 pupils in the special school for those with emotional, social and behavioural difficulties are engaged in work-related pathways. Work-based learning and alternative curriculum schemes are also strong features of provision in the area.

There are good progression opportunities at 16, with a wide range of general, vocational and work-related programmes available in the city. The number of students in school sixth forms and the college has grown by 20% in the last four years. However, opportunities for progression are unequal in different parts of the city, and the needs of a minority of young people are not met by the available curriculum provision. Standards of achievement at A and AS level in school sixth forms are below national average. Although participation in post-16 education has increased, it is still slightly below the national average. The proportion of young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) has decreased, with almost 10% not known to Connexions. There has been a significant increase in the proportion of care leavers

entering education, employment or training in 2004. Not all care leavers have a pathway plan. Transition planning for young people with significant special educational needs is carried out by a specialist transition worker and this is resulting in improvements for some vulnerable young people. Progression to higher education at 18 is above the national average.

SUMMARY

Strengths	Areas for improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CAMHS support for vulnerable groups including asylum seekers, YOT and looked after children • multi-agency working to achieve a city-wide focus on health promotion and prevention. 	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reducing teenage pregnancy.
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support systems for asylum seekers and refugees • CP strategy demonstrating good joint agency working for commissioning and service delivery informed by data analysis. 	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high numbers of looked after children and high numbers on the child protection register are high cost and high volume services for the council • meeting the national timescale targets for best interest in adoption • the development of an area wide family support strategy.
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • much good early years provision • improvements in % achieving five or more A* to Cs at GCSE in 2004 (including improvement in boys' achievements) • improvements at KS2 in 2004 (one of highest increases in the country) • many black and minority ethnic children perform at or above the city average. 	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • attainment at all key stages — results are in the bottom quartile for all key stages and often compare unfavourably with statistical neighbours — inconsistencies in rates of improvement need to be addressed • proportion of young people who achieve no GCSEs or equivalent at end of KS4 • value-added between KS2-3, 3-4, 2-4; DfES value added analysis indicates performance below national and statistical neighbour averages. • achievements and value added at A level • quality of out of school day care and crèche day care.

<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high numbers of looked after children are contributing to their reviews • software is used to engage young people in a range of participation activities • a high level of consultation and participation of young people, and with services accredited against 'Investing in Children' standards. 	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the coordination of consultation/participation to ensure collation and feedback.
<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • good levels of education, training and employment for care leavers • good curriculum on offer for 14 to 16 and 16 to 19, with good collaboration to improve learning opportunities 14 to 19 • reduction in the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training • success in increasing attendance and attainment of disaffected pupils. 	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improvements in provision to meet the needs of all young people 14 to 19 • further reduction in young people not in education, employment or training and reduction in numbers of young people not known to Connexions • achievement at AS/A level, so that young people achieve at least according to predictions • all care leavers should have a completed pathway plan.

Service management

The council self assessment was fairly comprehensive and where gaps were identified additional information was provided. The council should continue to develop its focus on outcomes reporting. There is a strong commitment to performance management and the use of data to inform priorities and plans. Information is used to drive improvement agendas and there is a particularly strong performance culture within social care. There are links to a corporate performance unit and increasing use of city-wide data to support locality targeting for service improvement.

There is active consultation with service users supported by a number of participation posts, including within the Children's Trust and to support the Children and Young People's Plan where the Investing in Children model has been adapted and partners are encouraged to apply for accreditation to the scheme.

There is a significant investment in social care training and HR strategies have reduced staff turnover and sickness levels; however, there is a relatively high vacancy rate reflecting regional and national recruitment and retention difficulties. There are no significant workforce issues for education.

There is good evidence of partnership working, including joint training, joint commissioning, some pooled budgets and a range of integrated service delivery, including with the voluntary sector.

The LEA inspection of 2002 reported significant improvements in the quality of education being provided by schools, but the progress expected and needed in the pupils' attainment has not been made. The attainment of pupils in Newcastle schools at all key stages remains low with results in the bottom quartile for all key stages and although there have been some significant improvement there are inconsistencies in the rate of improvement both at different stages and over time. DfES value-added data indicates performance below both the national average and that of similar authorities. The council has a challenging agenda in engaging partner agencies in work on thresholds, the Common Assessment Framework and a city-wide family support strategy. The Children & Young People's strategy should support this work.

The council has promising capacity to improve further.

Areas for exploration in the joint area review

Being healthy

Healthy life-styles are promoted for children and young people:

- reduction in teenage pregnancy.

Staying safe

The incidence of child abuse and neglect is minimised:

- numbers on the child protection register.

Children and young people are provided with a safe environment:

- numbers of looked after children.

Enjoying and achieving

Children and young people who are looked after are helped to enjoy and achieve:

- attainment and attendance of children looked after.

Children and young people are enabled and encouraged to attend and enjoy school and achieve highly:

- trends in achievement data, and value added, especially KS3
- curriculum developments 14 to 16, including vocational provision
- impact of secondary strategy (to be launched July 05).

Achieving economic well-being

Action is taken to ensure that 14-19 education and training is planned and delivered in a coordinated way, and to ensure that education and training (16-19) is of good quality:

- trend in NEETs and in those not known to Connexions
- progress made in implementing 14-19 strategy and post-inspection action plan, to ensure high quality provision and improved outcomes for all young people.

Final judgements

Please see your final annual performance assessment judgements attached at the end of this letter.

Yours sincerely



Flo Hadley

Divisional Manager
Office for Standards in Education



Jonathan Phillips

Director – Quality, Performance and Methods
Commission for Social Care Inspection

APA final judgements 2005: Newcastle upon Tyne City Council

Areas for judgement	Final judgements ¹
The contribution of <i>the local authority's social care services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people	3
The contribution of <i>local authority's education services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people.	2
The contribution of <i>the local authority's children's services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people.	2
The council's overall capacity to improve its services for children and young people	3

1

Grade	Service descriptors	Capacity to improve descriptors
4	A service that delivers well above minimum requirements for users	Very good
3	A service that consistently delivers above minimum requirements for users	Good/promising
2	A service that delivers only minimum requirements for users	Adequate
1	A service that does not deliver minimum requirements for users	Inadequate